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Glenn King

We, Dewey Bargiacchi (narrator) and Pamela Morton (interviewer),

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(dated) 10/28/81

Accepted for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project

by _____ _____
(Project Director) (Dated)

Interview with Dewey B. & G. King
Oct. 28, 1981

000 Intro

005 Father met mother in SF 1915
working in hotel as waitress
met dad there, married 1 yr. later
Uncle paid for passport
1916 moved to O because dad's business--North Pole Club--7th & Chester, in bus for 3 yrs.

* Mother indentured servant, came in steerage, passage was $100.00
took her a yr. to pay it off

030 Prohibition

032 * Boarding house opened by parents for RR workers on 7th & Center
Irish, Slavians, some Its

047 8 or 10 rms, 3 meals, tang. abilities

052 * After boardinghouse went into bootlegging
paid off policemen
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everybody doing it

070 No crime in West O
Emeryville - prostitution & gambling

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met all needs there

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perfect rapid transit

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109 7th St. main st.

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Piedmont was the upmost

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Villa della Pai (?) class restaurant
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350 Most customers fr SF, named
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Laborers recruited who couldn't read, write
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500 * RR people had best image
job w/ permanence
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engineers highest
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brakemen
laborers

510 Lots of irish for SP
police & fire dept.

524 Same eco level, bound them togeth

529 $1.00 day
wkd delivering meat as kids

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OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Dewey Bargiacchi and Glenn King

Interview conducted October 28, 1981 in Oakland, California by Pamela Morton for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Transcription and summary prepared by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, November 1994, Anthropological Studies Center, Sonoma State University Academic Foundation, Inc., for the Cypress I-880 Replacement Project, District 4, CALTRANS.

Dewey Bargiacchi was born in 1919 in West Oakland. His parents, Italian emigrants, ran several businesses in the neighborhood: a North Pole Club c 1916-1920, a boarding house for railroad workers c 1920-1923, and a new North Pole Club at 8th and Kirkham. The informant's mother also worked seasonally at the Rosenberg's Cannery. In 1948 Mr. Bargiacchi and his mother, Josephine, opened up the Villa de La Paix, an elegant restaurant serving Italian food at 6th and Alice. Dignitaries from Oakland and San Francisco were apparently regular customers. In the taped interview, Josephine Bargiacchi emerges as a feisty and respected entrepreneur.

This interview includes memories of shopping along 7th Street, the importance of baseball to neighborhood boys, and a brief discussion of the African-American community and Slim Jenkins' bar and restaurant. Of interest is the fact that Mr. Bargiacchi spoke not only Italian as a child but also Portuguese and Slovenian, a consequence of his multi-ethnic neighborhood.

Also included in the conversation is Glenn King who was born in West Oakland in 1920 and moved out when he was seven or eight-years-old.

[The following transcription is a verbatim text in standard English with little or no editing. Project funds did not allow for a subject index.]

OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY PROJECT

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[Tape is cued up.]

Pamela Morton: "Yes, so I'm interested in ... your family history and the restaurant business. How long has your family been in West Oakland?"

Dewey Bargiacchi: "Well, my father left my mother in San Francisco in 1915. And she was working in a hotel as a waitress, making beds and doing a little bit of everything in the hotel. And she met my dad there and they fell in love and a year later she paid off--- her uncle paid for her passport [sic] you know, to bring her back here. Why then, she, when she married my dad they moved to Oakland, and that was in 1916."

Morton: "1916 they moved to Oakland."

Bargiacchi: "Right."

Morton: "Why did they move to Oakland from San Francisco?"

Bargiacchi: "Well, because my dad had his business here. And the business was a bar called the North Pole Club, on 7th and Chestnut."

Morton: "How long had he been in business?"

Bargiacchi: "Uh, he was in business here for uh three years, three or four years."

Morton: "And his family? How long had they been in Oakland?"

Bargiacchi: "Well his family were in Italy. He came from Italy."

Morton: "Uh-huh. He was born there."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, he was born. Yeah, he was born in Italy."

Glenn King: "But he, may I interrupt you just a minute?"

Bargiacchi and Morton: "Oh sure."

King: "What he's telling you there is very interesting. His mother, in fact, was an indentured servant. In other words, she made a deal with her uncle. She had come to work in a hotel [Bargiacchi: "To pay for her passport (sic)]. Yeah, in other words, that was a matter of honor. She had to pay every penny off before she could leave and get married."

Morton: "Did she intend to stay then, in this country?"

Bargiacchi: "Oh sure she did. Oh yeah, sure she did."

King: "Everybody wanted to come to America then. But it was the passage, you know, the, what do you call, 'steerage'-"

Bargiacchi: "Steerage! She did come in steerage, oh sure."

Morton: "So that there must have been some contact here already, family members-"

Bargiacchi: "Her uncle. Her uncle had brought her over."

Morton: "That's what you said, yeah."

Bargiachhi: "And I think the passage that time was a hundred dollars. And she had to pay a hundred dollars before she was given her freedom out of bondage."

King: "Probably took a year to do it."

Bargiacchi: "A year! Yeah."

King: "And I was saying that his family was, had the North Pole Club, it was also during Prohibition, part of that time. What was Prohibition time? 1920's somewhere in there?" [Ed. note: Prohibition was in effect from 1920-1933].

Bargiacchi: "Yes. And then right after ... Prohibition came in, my mom and dad opened up a boarding ... house. Yeah. For the railroad people in the area. And she would cook for them. And this is how she started out ... in the restaurant business."

Morton: "So, it was because of Prohibition that they had to seek out another-"

Bargiacchi: "Another way of living. Yeah, right."

Morton: "Was the boarding house then near the 7th and Chester-"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah. That was on 7th and Center."

Morton: "Seventh and Center. And meals were served."

Bargiacchi: "Meals were served for the people that were boarding room. They pay so much a month and they would get their meal and pay board."

Morton: "Do you know then the railroad employees that were at the boarding house. Were they all Italian or-"

Bargiacchi: "Oh no. No, no. They were Irish, different [groups]. No blacks, naturally, at that time. But there were Slovenians, Irish, and some Italians I think."

Morton: "How large was it?"

Bargiacchi: "I think she had about eight or ten rooms. And she would feed breakfast, lunch and dinner."

Morton: "And how about English, for her. Was she speaking [?]"

Bargiacchi: "She [spoke] half and half, you know. Spoke mostly Italian during that time. But my father spoke pretty good English."

Morton: "And then ... because she was cooking, that's how the restaurant business [began]."

Bargiacchi: "That's how she eventually went into the restaurant business."

Morton: "Uh-huh. Because she enjoyed that work?"

Bargiachhi: "And then, after the boarding house, then they went into bootlegging."

King: "It was illicit booze."

Morton: "Oh, tell me how that worked."

Bargiacchi: "Well, you just get alcohol and make your whiskey and gin. And you sell it to people. [King: "That's called 'bathtub gin.'"] And people come and see ya. They buy the half pint or pint, you know."

Morton: "So it would be just made in the basement?"

Bargiachhi: "Yeah. And other place[s]. Yeah."

Morton: "Was that fairly common...?"

Bargiacchi: "Oh yeah. A lot of people were doing it then. Oh yeah."

King: "And he also had to, when the policemen came by, you had to give him a free drink [slight chuckle]."

Bargiacchi: "Oh yeah. You feed 'em and then give him free bottles and a nice Christmas present. [Mr. King continues to laugh]."

King: "So it was illegal but it was a kind of an accepted thing."

Bargiacchi: "And during that time, the Vice Squad, what did they call them? They called it the Moral Squad [King: "The Moral Squad"] They called it the Moral Squad at that time. [King laughs] And on the police department there were two heads on the Vice, or Moral Squad. And one would have his friends and the other head guy would have his friends, you know. And they would tell each other, 'Don't fool around with my people!' [Loud burst of laughter from group.] And the other way around, I'll take care of <u>your</u> people. It was kind of an interesting world at that time."

King: "Pay off mostly with booze, you know."

Bargiacchi: "It didn't make too much difference to anybody at that time."

King: "Everybody was doing it. You know about Prohibition: You know, it was the 'noble experiment' they called it and uh, but it really brought up crime.... We didn't have too much crime-"

Bargiacchi: "No crime, no crime."

Morton: "In West Oakland?"

Bargiachhi: "No. No, hardly any crime at all."

King: [There was some crime in Emeryville.]

Bargiacchi: "Well, Emeryville was the place that [you] had to be careful. Where they had the prostitution and the gambling."

Morton: "None of that was down in West Oakland...?"

Bargiacchi: "No."

King: "See, you see Oakland, you go down see West Oakland today. You don't see it the way he saw it and I saw it. We remember these big homes ... now they call them Victorian homes, but big lawns, beautifully kept, you know. And they had these little ... carriage steps, the blocks of cement. You step down out of the carriage and then they had a place to tie your horse up. And that's the stuff we saw back there because there weren't too many horses in those days. But, although, there were weren't there?"

Bargiacchi: "Oh, there were horses. You bet, sure."

King: "Mostly for draying...."

Bargiacchi: "I remember, when I was a little kid ... the horse and carts with the vegetable, the fish, would come along. Rag bottles and sack men. Sure."

Morton: "So a lot of street vendors then?"

Bargiacchi: "Street vendors, yeah. During the early part of the---only after the turn of the century, 1900. Like I was saying, West Oakland was just a little city of its own. They had everything they wanted, movies and there was hardly at any time, that you'd want to go to town. And if you did go do town, it was a real memorable day!"

Morton: "And what was town at that time?"

Bargiacchi: "Well, maybe about a mile and a half away. From West Oakland to Broadway."

King: "Yeah, from where he lived...."

Bargiacchi: "Maybe a mile and a half, two miles."

King: "Yeah, I'd say a mile."

Morton: "So Broadway-"

Bargiacchi: "From West Oakland to Broadway, from Market to Broadway, then about a mile and that was considered the 'town.' We never, the people in West Oakland, you know, hardly ever got out of town, out of West Oakland. Because there was no need to go out of town."

King: "What was the theatre down there? The Star Theatre on Market-"

Bargiacchi: "The Star and the Lincoln-"

King: "Lincoln Theatre, down on 7th and Peralta."

Bargiacchi: "The Star, the Star was on-"

Morton: "And those were movie theatres?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah."

King: "And the big thing of course, you can't talk about West Oakland without talking about the Red Train. The famous Red Train and the ferry mole, we called it 'the mole.' Now this Red Train ran all the way out to San Leandro, think of it. Talk about rapid transit! We had the perfect rapid transit system back then. It ran from the ferry all the way out to Estudillo Avenue. Or was it Dutton Avenue? Dutton Avenue. [Bargiacchi agrees.] In San Leandro."

Bargiacchi: "And then we had the street cars.... The Red Train was on 7th Street. The street car was on 8th Street."

King: "So 7th Street was the main street.... And he [sic] had all these great barbershops, remember Freddy Love's barbershop? And then you had great restaurants down there, not really great in the sense of Continental, but dependable places. Good clothing stores. A lot of good clothing stores down there."

Bargiacchi: "There were a lot of clothing stores, furniture stores-"

King: "Furniture stores. All of this is gone!"

Bargiacchi: "They had anything that you wanted down in West Oakland."

Morton: "So you were able to meet all your needs..."

Bargiacchi: "So you didn't really have to get out of West Oakland to-"

Morton: "What would you consider West Oakland? The boundaries?"

Bargiacchi: "From- one thing, they used to call it 'Piedmont-by-the-Sea,' West Oakland. [Morton: "Really?"] Yes. Piedmont-by-the-Sea. And the boundaries would be what, Willow to-"

King: "Well I would say from Market, we used to call the 'West of Market Boys.' Remember?"

Bargiacchi: "Right. From Market down to Willow. From Willow to Market."

King: "From Willow to Market."

Bargiacchi: "And I guess from 18th to 2nd, yeah."

King: [....]

Morton: "But this Piedmont-by-the-Sea. Can you tell me why and when it got that name?"

Bargiacchi: "Well, I don't know [slight laugh]. Glenn, do you know why it got that name?"

King: "Well in the first place, they had great big beautiful houses down there."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, we figured we were just a great community, we were by the water. And Piedmont at the time was considered the utmost. You know. But we considered ourselves the utmost too. So we were 'Piedmont-by-the-Sea!' And we were on the water."

Morton: "So it got that name after the Piedmont area was developed."

Bargiacchi: "Yea, I think so...."

Morton: "As a comparison maybe."

King: "Within that area that he gave you, those configurations there, you had some very wonderful families that were very very proud of their family history. In other words they'd come over maybe in 1850, you know. Maybe as a second or third generation. And they kept their houses up nice, you know."

Bargiacchi: "Like the Pardee family... He was a Governor at one time...."

Morton: "Well that's a really <u>big</u> house. Were most of the houses big or were they-"

King and Bargiacchi: "Not that big, not that big."

Bargiacchi: "A lot of them were a pretty good size. Not as big as the Pardee Mansion."

King: "Now they didn't have garages, they had stables, see. They had places for feeding the horses."

Morton: "Was there one area where the big houses were? Or were they mixed in?"

Bargiacchi: "The bigger houses were up towards town. Like where the Pardee Mansion is. But when you take Adeline, Adeline, Chester [or Chestnut?] and Linden, they were good-size homes but not the homes that were beyond Market, towards town."

King: "His world, of course, centered around baseball and a place called Bayview Park.... It's now called Raimondi [Park] ."

Morton: "Was Bayview Park the one that was sort of developed by Father McNally?"

Bargiacchi: "No, that was Father Ben. ... I don't remember Father McNally but the reason why we played, well, it was the only baseball diamond in that area, where the West Oakland boys could go to."

Morton: "Was at Bayview Park?"

Bargiacchi: "Bayview Park.... And uh, like St. Patrick's Church was down there, and we played CYO [Catholic Youth Organization] at Bayview. And then there was another church in that area, was St. Joseph's. ... a certain amount of people went to St. Patrick's and the other people went to St. Joes."

Morton: "Were they defined by certain ethnic groups those churches?"

Bargiacchi: "No, not ethnic groups. Just-"

King: "Everybody played baseball. Except frankly, there was probably a little more Jim Crow than we would like to admit."

Bargiacchi: "No, but I'm talking about two churches. Now St. Joe Church was at 8th and ... Chestnut and 7th and Chestnut. And St. Patrick's was down at 9th and Peralta."

King: "... he grew up with a baseball that he would take to bed at night, you know. Just like kids [today]. Baseball was a big thing, see. Because that was the days of Babe Ruth and so he'd go up there to Bayview and watch these great players, like..."

Bargiacchi: "Like Botch [?] Lombardi, Gusie Sewer and-"

King: "And eventually he grew old enough. And they said 'Hey kid, do you want to play?'"

Morton: "So the park was used by local[s]?"

Bargiacchi: "Yes."

[They talk about 'Pop Gallagher,' a groundskeeper who was well-loved. His picture is in the 'Great Century' Room of Francesca's Restaurant, place of interview.]

King: "So baseball was the center of his life and I think most of the kids down there. There's no television, you know. And very little radio, you know."

Bargiacchi: "And you did a lot of walking.... If you wanted to practice baseball you'd have to walk a mile and a half, maybe two miles to go to Bayview and practice."

King: "And ... there were quite a few canneries down there, wasn't there?"

Bargiacchi: "Yep. There was Rosenberg's Cannery."

King: "This meant in the summertime, when the women, mom would get a chance to get down to work in the summertime. In the cannery-"

Morton: "Sort of seasonal work for her?"

King: "Yeah seasonal, very seasonal."

Morton: "Was that for additional income or was it just extra-"

Bargiacchi: "Just seasonal work, that's all. And then we should mention Slim Jenkins down there.... He was a-"

King: "a Black entrepreneur, you should say."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah but he was kind of 'Mr. West Oakland' at one time. You know, of the black people."

Morton: "Uh-huh. ... was it only for the Blacks?"

Bargiacchi: "No, he was in that section, in that area where the black people were. And he had a bar called 'Slim Jenkins.' Bar and restaurant which was for colored, but a lot of the white people used to go there at that time."

King: "Back in the 30's they called it 'slumming.' Go 'slumming.' But that may not be absolutely fair to him because-"

Bargiacchi: "He ran a real good place. A real fine place. A real gentleman."

Morton: "And you said 'an area where the blacks were.' Did they sort of have an area where they lived?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, sure they did, yeah, sure."

Morton: "What was that area?"

Bargiacchi: "They were down on the Roll [?], Wood--- Roll, Wood and what else?"

King: "Well I used to see down there by, not too many, but by Linden Street."

Bargiacchi: "No. Not Linden, no. No, no, not Linden!"

King: "That's where I lived ... I see a few around there."

Bargiacchi: "No. Most of the colored people were way down on Leonard and on Pine. Yeah, Willow, Pine and Wood."

King: "See. There was not the opportunity for them, you see. But, I tell you one thing: the most respected black person in West Oakland was the gentleman who was a Pullman porter...."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah. The Pullman people were <u>good</u> people."

Morton: "Is that what most of them were doing?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, most of the people then were working for the railroad."

Morton: "And again, what time period would you say that this was?"

Bargiacchi: "This would be from say, well from what I can remember, '25, yeah, up to the War."

Morton: "Could I ask you when you were born?"

Bargiacchi: "In 1919."

Morton: "1919. In West Oakland. Uh-huh. Were you born at home?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah."

Morton: "And Mr. King, I'm interested in your family."

King: "I was born in 1920. I'm a youngster."

Morton: "[slight laugh] Uh-huh. And do you know how long your family had spent in West Oakland?"

King: "My family, my mother's family was related to the Madden Family. And her uncle was a congressman from San Francisco. So we always brought that up [?]. But I think

it's far more interesting to concentrate [on Dewey Bargiacchi] because see, I moved away when I was about seven or eight. But he stayed down there for years."

Morton: "How long were you down in that area?"

Bargiacchi: "I was, moved out of there 'bout 1929, 30, '29 yeah. I'll tell you a funny story of what happened while we were bootlegging. Um, it was the Mafia, the Mafia came up to my mother one time and uh asked my mother to come out to the car on 8th Street. And there were two men, both parked on the sidewalk, but they wouldn't come in and do any talking. They wanted her to come out there and talk. So she went out there and I went out there too!"

King: "Were you worried?"

Bargiacchi: "Sure I was worried. So I was a kid, maybe fifteen, fourteen, something like that. And they told my mother, because at that time, they were going to be prosecuted in Fresno by the government. And they told my mother said, 'If you want to die in bed, you better not say nothing.' And so when I heard that I went back in the house. I got a baseball bat. I chopped up that car. [King: "Did you?"] I broke the windshield, broke everything, I was so mad."

King: "Oooh. That sounds so unlike you [laughter]."

Bargiacchi: "But then you know, I never heard anything about it, my mother went down to Fresno and testified and [didn't hear anything more about it???]. Guess they were afraid of me! [laughter]"

King: "See, he didn't tell you that his father died in 1931. At that time, he and his mother were alone running that place."

Morton: "Ah, so your mother really took on the whole responsibility-"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah. Right from '31 on. ...and this happened in '31 I think."

King: "Right after your dad died."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah."

King: "Well you were only 11 then, 12."

Bargiacchi: "Somewhere around there."

Morton: "Was there much Mafia activity in West Oakland?"

Bargiacchi: "Not much, not much then, no. They just, there were just a few then, you know."

King: "Not well organized, like it is now. See, your mafia's organized in Chicago and New York-"

Bargiacchi: "I say maybe they were mafias then. But maybe they weren't. Either they were kind of a head of a little wing or something like that. They thought they were Mafia...."

Morton: "And back to the business then: How long did the boarding house last?"

Bargiacchi: "The boarding house lasted about three years. Then we went bootleggin'. In '32 we opened up the North Pole Club on 8th and Kirkham."

Morton: "The same name-"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah. Same name just a different location. And that was when beer came in. It was 30, 32. Beer came in."

King: "No, see the election wasn't until '33."

Bargiacchi: "I mean the beer came in, in '32 and then liquor came in in '33."

King: "But you see, Roosevelt wasn't elected until November of 1932 and so it wasn't until the next year that beer-"

Bargiacchi: "No. Beer came in in '32!"

King: "Was it really? Well, ok."

Bargiacchi: '32 and then liquor came in in '33."

Morton: "And so for a year only beer-"

Bargiacchi: "Beer and wine and food. And then '33, they started with the hard liquor."

King: "You might mention the prices that you had down there."

Bargiacchi: "Oh, 65 cents, 75 cents-"

King: "For a whole meal."

Bargiacchi: "And for a dollar, you got everything. And the drinks were-"

Morton: "So meals were served then at the North Pole?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, sure, yeah."

King: "Tell her about the free barbecue."

Bargiacchi: "And every Wednesday night we'd have free barbecue of broiled chicken. We'd have a barbecue in the backyard, spare ribs, steaks, you know. For fifteen cents... buying a beer you could eat a meal! [King laughs] But those were the things you had to do at that time to pull people in."

Morton: "And what people were coming into 8th and Kirkham?"

Bargiacchi: "We had at the North Pole Club, on 8th and Kirkham, we brought in the very best: judges, attorneys, all the politicians, fantastic people, that are way high up, even now. Right now."

Morton: "And were these people living in West Oakland then?"

Bargiacchi: "Parts. Some were living in West Oakland and some just came from, you know, downtown to North Pole."

King: "Mother's name was Josephine. Everybody used to brag, 'Oh, I know Josephine personally. Oh I know her.' And she did. She had a wide, wide range of friends. She couldn't talk very good English...."

Bargiacchi: "She was a good bouncer too [big laughter]. She was a bouncer, I tell you. She didn't take any stuff from anybody."

Morton: "Did you help out there?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah. Sure."

Morton: "Did you have many brothers and sisters?"

Bargiacchi: "No, I'm the only one."

King: "... I was just amazed at her tremendous capacity to--she'd get up in the morning at 3 o'clock in the morning. And go down to the ... produce section [market] and buy all the vegetables: nothing but the best. And boy, nobody cheated her out of, short-changed her or anything. Boy she knew.... And then, she'd start, the restaurant business starts early. Like we start here early. And she [worked] all day long. And I'd go down there at night and see her there ... And she'd be sitting there, you know, talking to somebody, drinking-"

Bargiacchi: "You know, during those days there was nothing

frozen. For the vegetables you'd have peas or string beans or whatever and she had to shell all those peas by hand. Like I say, after going to the produce market, then she'd come back, she'd start preparing everything for lunch."

King: "Did she ever take a nap in the afternoon?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

King: "Oh, she did."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, she went to bed about 2, 2:30 in the afternoon."

Morton: "So she must have gone almost every day then."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, sure."

Morton: "Where was the produce market located?"

Bargiacchi: "Same place, down on uh [Lower Broadway]. And sometimes she used to go there and other times they'd have these trucks, trucks with all the produce."

King: "They'd come by. She'd buy it off the truck, yeah."

Bargiacchi: "Buy it off the truck. From Rattles [Ratto's?] a guy called 'Rattles,' used to have a truck."

King: "Now she deserves a place in history for one great reason. She brought the really first-class restaurant to Oakland and Dewey was her partner. They collaborated on it. And that was called the Villa de la Paix [?], and it came at 6th and Alice. And I know, and you can verify this, that Oakland was seen to be the graveyard of restaurant attempts: many people from San Francisco came over here. They were gonna show, give a real class restaurant to Oakland, you know. Well they were really gonna come in here and they were gonna show Oakland how a restaurant was like. They all went broke. They all went busted. And so when his mother and Dewey bought this building down at Sixth and Alice and opened up... and it was a <u>fantastic</u> [place]. Now when I say fantastic it's just unbelievable."

Bargiacchi: "You thought you were in Paris...."

Morton: "So not only the food but the interior."

King: "There was this huge big bar surrounded by these heavy padded chairs, you know. Great big thick rugs and deep reds; everything was just Italian-"

Bargiacchi: "Had the canaries... remember the canaries we had? And then we even had a myna bird in there too. And a lot of plants. And beautiful flowers."

King: "It just knocked Oakland dead, see? But then it got bigger and bigger and people would come down and I swear to God, that they'd sit there gladly sit in those big chairs, wait three hours for a table, see."

Morton: "So was there anything comparable at that time?"

King: "Nothing!"

Bargiacchi: "Most of the people we got were from San Francisco."

King: "George Christopher, for example, mayor of San Francisco."

Bargiacchi: "Mel Belli..."

Morton: "And when did Villa de la Paix open?"

Bargiacchi: "That was in 1948."

Morton: "And were you able to open that because the North Pole Club had done so well that-"

Bargiacchi: "Prior to this we had the Villa Chardonay in San Mateo. ... I think we had grown beyond what she was looking for. She was looking for West Oakland.

King: "Yeah, but you want to know what happened to his mother, you know. You know she was a great success at restauranteur. Now, you want to get back to the early [years]."

Morton: "Well I'm very interested in the restaurant as well. So it was all Italian food that was served?"

Bargiacchi: "Uh-hmm."

Morton: "Were there special dishes that were specialties or very popular?"

Bargiacchi: "Well, at that time, some of the stuff we had was very special."

King: "But he figured it out once, that, what, they gave away hors d'oeuvres..."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, the hors d'oeuvres alone were-"

King: "They'd give away oysters and shrimp and stuff. You can't do that! It will cost you a fortune."

Bargiacchi: "Crab, eel."

King: "He said today it would cost them $40 to pay for what they gave away. Is that right?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah. Artichokes in oil and mushrooms in oil...."

King: [Notes that in restaurant business you usually don't make money on food, but rather on drinks sold.]

Bargiacchi: "A lot of people would just come in and eat the hors d'oeuvres and they couldn't go any further. So they'd take their entree home."

King: "Yeah, doggy bag it. But the profit was-"

Bargiacchi: "On the drinks."

Morton: "Was there entertainment?"

Bargiacchi: "We had an organ player, that's all."

King: "Did you have entertainment down at the North Pole Club?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, yeah. We ... used to go over to KALX, too. A little combo, three piece band. It had dancing...."

Morton: "So there seems to have been quite a social life then in West Oakland, between Slim Jenkins and the jazz that was going on along 7th Street."

Bargiacchi: "Well I think the only places, there were some bars. But the only places where you could eat was I think Slim Jenkins, and I think the North Pole Club."

Morton: "Because not all the bars served food?"

Bargiacchi: "None of the bars served any food. No...."

King: "See what changed West Oakland ... is that the War came along. And Henry J. Kaiser had all these shipyards out there in Richmond. And he was given a procurement contract and I know, remember Joe Luke that used to work with me, went all over the United States recruiting laborers to come out here. And they didn't care whether they could read or write or had any training with the tools, or whatnot. Ok. Here's your money, here's your train fare, here's your expense money. And we've got a house lined up for you, they had all these houses built. So he brought people from all

through the South that had never been anywhere exposed to a metropolitan situation at all. They brought thousands and thousands of them. And these people were suddenly thrust into this society that they had money and they had a promise as long as the War lasted, great jobs."

Morton: "Did Kaiser house them as well?"

King (and Bargiacchi): "Yes, yes."

Morton: "In West Oakland?"

King: "Not in West Oakland, Richmond. Then, West Oakland became the focal point for black society. And it changed after that. A lot of people, right or wrong... began to move out of West Oakland. They went out to the suburbs. My family went out to East Oakland, to Havenscourt District, you see, when I was about eight."

Morton: "Was it in that movement out, was it a group movement? Did the Italians move as a group or-"

Bargiacchi: "No, no, no. Everybody just moved when they felt like they've had enough."

King: "Just a gradual change. And then the houses began to deteriorate down there. Those beautiful old houses and the lawns went. And it was not just the place it was when he was a kid and I was a kid [portion of tape erased]."

Morton: "... through a column that appears in the Oakland Tribune that you keep track of the West Oakland-"

King and Bargiacchi: "Oh sure."

Morton: "You do feel nostalgic then for that area."

Both men: "Oh yes...."

Morton: "Was in then because of the sense of community that-"

Bargiacchi: "It's the, people."

Morton: "People?"

Bargiacchi: "The people."

King: "You see, they had a lot of people, a lot of families ... that came over here that didn't speak [English], like Greeks, and they spoke, the mothers and fathers spoke Greek. And the Yugoslavians, they spoke the Yugoslavian tongue. And the Italians and the Portuguese. But the kids, they get out and play baseball together. See?

they were friends, you know. They had nicknames for all the kids. They were buddies, you see. That's what happens today. He sees people come in here that he hasn't seen for 40 years but they remember-"

Bargiacchi: "I used to know three languages when I was a kid. I spoke Slovenian, Italian and Portuguese. And that's because I used to practically live with my neighbors, next door, and they were Slovonians [sic]. And then they had the *chamaritta* and a lot of Portuguese people on 2nd Street--hey, it's easy to pick up those languages when you're a kid. You know? And then I went over to Europe for a year and when I came back I couldn't even speak English anymore! [King laughs] And I miss speaking those languages, you know. I miss speaking Slovonian and Portuguese... Yeah, I spoke them fantastically!"

Morton: "So the children mingled. Did the parents mingle?"

Bargiacchi: "Not as much as the children did, no."

Morton: "And when you say that most of your neighbors were Slovonian, where were you living at that point?"

Bargiacchi: "That was on Chester Street. On Chester Street, between 5th and 7th."

Morton: "Were there actually sections: where the Slovonians lived together and the Italians?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah sure."

Morton: "Where were those sections, do you know?

Bargiacchi: ... like the Irish, they were up there by the St. Patrick's Church. And the Slovenians were around---I just can't define where they were, you know."

Morton: "Uh-huh. But they did sort of live, keep together?"

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, they kind of lived, togetherness."

King: "I think the ones that had the best image down there in West Oakland were the railroad people. And of course the engineers were the highest. ... and then the firemen, they were a little bit lower on the ladder. And then the brakemen. And then the laborers, see, that was all--- but if you worked with the railroad you were recognized. You were somebody, you had a job with, you know, permanent...."

Bargiacchi: "Yeah, a lot of the Irish people worked for the S.P."

Morton: "So those were the top jobs available then were the railroad jobs. The most money-"

Bargiacchi : "Yeah."

King: "A lot of the Irish went into the police department and the fire department."

Morton: "Within the neighborhood, how did that work out. Was everybody pretty much on the same economic level?"

Bargiacchi: "Oh yeah. Except some of the people, like he was saying who were engineers. They had big jobs. Who was the other people? But they were one the same level as everybody else was."

Morton: "Do you think that bound them together because of that?"

Bargiacchi: "Oh I'm sure it did.... I remember when you were working for a dollar a day then. A dollar a day. I remember I worked for a dollar a day delivering the meat when I was a kid.... And I remember at the old North Pole Club, we had a janitor, seven dollars a week, seven days a week."

King: "Just think of that, huh. Black?"

Bargiacchi: "No, white."

King: "Yeah, white, huh [slight laugh]."

Morton: "So, were most of the people employed down there?"

[Someone comes in and the interview is interrupted.]

End of formal interview

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